

the red-hot inflation that is already burning up the paychecks of the American people. People who are on fixed incomes are finding their purchasing power shrinking by the day because of the threat of inflation. We know this bill would also hurt our energy security. It would give massive tax breaks to the wealthy while increasing taxes on the middle class. It would literally cut funding for safety net hospitals and drive the national debt to unimaginable heights. Finally, and maybe most importantly, it would hand to the Federal Government decisions that should be made by families.

I hope our colleague from West Virginia will continue to hold strong against the dangers of this bill. At a minimum, we need to tap the brakes and take what he called a “strategic pause.”

So it seems the Democratic leader is on track to miss yet another deadline. For the country’s sake, I hope this bill does not arrive after Christmas. I hope it never comes at all.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. OSSOFF). The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I appreciate my friend from Texas and his comments, but I have trouble following some of them.

When he came to the floor after the deserved credit for the Trump 2017–2018 tax cut for the rich—70 percent of the benefits went to the 1 percent—he did take credit for his work in the Finance Committee. He should take credit for that, but that is what drove this hole in the deficit where the rich got richer.

I remember during that—and the Presiding Officer was not here at the time, but he can still see it here.

You can look out the window, and you can see Senator MCCONNELL’s office there and the lobbyists lined up. You should have seen it back when Senator CORNYN was talking about this tax cut—this tax cut for the rich—when they made these promises: You know, if you give tax cuts to really rich people and corporations, it will trickle down, and we will all do better. They will hire more people, and they will raise wages.

Well, we know what they did. In fact, they just announced another round of it—a whole bunch of stock buybacks for the executives. So we know what happened during those years. Profits went up for corporations, and stock markets soared. Executive compensation exploded through the roof, and wages for most people in Mansfield, GA, and Mansfield, OH, and Marietta, GA, and Marietta, OH, stayed flat. We know that. That is why Build Back Better makes sense. It begins to put money in people’s pockets.

And what my friend from Texas—and we sit across from each other in the Finance Committee and work together on some issues, and I appreciate what he has done on some other bills. But what he didn’t explain is why every one of them opposes the child tax credit. On

the child tax credit, we know a number of things. I have been working on this since 2013. It started with not a lot of support, but it built huge support by this year, early this year. Sitting at this desk, on March 6, I voted—as did the Presiding Officer from Georgia in the first really big vote he cast as a Member of the Senate, in the majority—for the child tax credit.

Two different times, every single Republican voted no. Every single Democrat voted yes. Do you know what that meant? It meant that starting in July, when we got it set up, 90 percent of the families in Georgia, 90 percent of the families in Ohio who have children under the age of 18 got at least a \$3,000-a-year tax cut.

Think about that. There are families who struggle with paying rent. Twenty-five percent of renters in this country before the pandemic paid more than half their income in rent. Think of the pressure those families are under if, at the end of every month, they cobble together \$700 to pay their rent. They get a \$3,000 tax cut. The family who is struggling to pay for diapers or childcare, especially—the cost of childcare has exploded.

Whether it is Metro Atlanta or Metro Columbus, OH, or whether it is smalltown Milledgeville or smalltown Shelby, OH, families struggle with childcare, and this \$300 a month per child—or \$250, depending on the age of the children—makes a huge difference in those families.

One father said: You know, for the first time, I have money now to buy my daughter fast-pitch softball equipment.

A mother said to me: I have money now. For the first time, I can send my son for a week to summer camp and buy school supplies in the fall.

And, as I said, for diapers and other expenses for infants, it makes all the difference in the world.

I expect the Presiding Officer, I hope, has a long career in this body. I don’t know if he will ever get the opportunity to vote on anything as big as what we did in March with the recovery act and what we are about to do with Build Back Better. For me, they are the highlights of my career.

I hope the Presiding Officer has a lot of years in front of him, but this is the most consequential thing this Congress has done, not just to fight poverty, lift poor kids and struggling parents who are working so hard to raise kids and balance two jobs and all that, not just to help kids get out of poverty but to make life easier.

As I said, 90 percent of the families who have children under 18 in Georgia, in Ohio, and every State in between are going to get a \$3,000-a-year tax cut. That alone is so important.

I wish my colleague from Texas would address why they all vote no. They have had two chances. It sounds like they are going to take their third chance and vote no again.

I don’t understand it. Is it that the lobbyists who line up in Senator

MCCONNELL’s office have some weird philosophy that markets always know better? Is it just that they don’t really care about helping kids? I don’t know what their logic is. I just know what our logic is, and it will make our country better.

TRIBUTE TO ALYSSA BROCKINGTON

Mr. President, I would like to honor a member of my staff who has been such a valuable part of our office, Alyssa Brockington. She is joining us in the Chamber today.

She has done such important work on healthcare and on economic justice. She is moving on to a new opportunity—again, to fight for a lot of the people whom we fight for in our office. She is moving on at the end of the year.

She has been with our office for 5 years, working to expand access to healthcare for Ohioans, for people around the country and to bring down drug prices and healthcare costs, one of the major goals of Build Back Better. She has worked to make sure that not only can families afford to see a doctor but that the care they get actually makes them healthier and serves their needs. We know that so often that isn’t the case for too many people, especially the most vulnerable.

Last year, Ms. Brockington led efforts in the Senate, with me, to introduce a resolution declaring racism a public health crisis. And this is an effort, but what I love about this effort is that, in the first place, it really kind of happened. It started at the community level, in Hamilton County, Ohio, in the Cincinnati area. Other communities in the State began to pass resolutions to declare racism a public health crisis.

She worked with leaders. She worked with advocates in these communities. She worked with organizations like the National Urban League and the YWCA and other Senate offices to introduce a resolution. It acknowledges the systemic barriers that people of color, especially Black Americans, continue to face in our healthcare system.

The first step to solving this problem is recognizing its existence and understanding it. Some of us in this Chamber have read the 1619 Project. It has just come out. It came out of a New York Times very lengthy, very detailed series of articles. This is what Ms. Brockington is helping to address, some of these endemic problems we face. She has always pushed our office to recognize the issues and the people that too often get overlooked in this town.

Ms. Brockington led efforts in our office to work to prevent maternal mortality, working on bills like the Healthy Moms Act and the Supporting Best Practices for Healthy Moms Act.

Mothers—we know especially young mothers of color—are dying at an alarming rate in this country. It is pretty unbelievable that so many women still die in childbirth in the richest country in the world. We have the best healthcare, to be sure, but it

doesn't, let's say, trickle down to everybody in this country.

Despite having the best hospitals and the best doctors in the world, deaths are going up, not down. The legislation Alyssa has championed would help expand coverage options for pregnant mothers so they can get the care they need to have healthy pregnancies and healthy babies.

Thanks to her hard work and thanks to my colleague and my friend Senator WYDEN, we included a provision from the Healthy Moms Act that would provide postpartum women with 12 months of Medicaid coverage in the Build Back Better bill.

I mean, think about that—these women now who give birth will have 12 months of Medicaid coverage—what that can mean, actually having insurance, not having to worry as your colicky baby at several weeks old is keeping you awake at night and suffering, and you are thinking also in your mind: How am I going to pay if I take her to the doctor? How am I going to pay? How am I going to afford this coverage?

This does that.

Another major contribution Alyssa has made to our office is her leadership informing and guiding our Economic Justice Task Force. Economic justice is central to everything we do for the people of Ohio.

I would notice—and I know I am not allowed to wear this on the floor. So I will just hold it up, if that doesn't violate the rules.

I ran in today and I met briefly with one of the workers who makes food in this building. They just joined and formed Local 23 of UNITE HERE. What that is going to mean for her life, what that is going to mean for workers, that they have somebody now representing them, bargaining for better wages, better benefits—we know the cafeteria workers here, the people who work to serve us, were making as little as \$11 and \$12 an hour.

This Economic Justice Task Force will mean our office will do better to engage communities that are overlooked, to discuss and champion issues that are central to Ohio communities and to the workers here and all over the country, communities that don't often have much of a voice in the government.

She has been the driving force behind this task force for 2 full years now, organizing meetings, facilitating discussions, encouraging colleagues to get involved and speak up. She coordinates with other staff. She plans quarterly events. She circulates ideas for feedback.

One colleague said: All around, she is so inclusive and empathetic. As you work in this job and work in these jobs, having staff that is kind and inclusive and empathetic is sort of everything because they will treat the citizens of Alaska or Georgia or Ohio with that empathy and with that kindness. She has been that kind of asset to our of-

fice and to our work for the people of Ohio.

We will miss her dearly. I know she will continue to do wonderful things to ensure more Americans get the compassionate and affordable and effective healthcare they need.

I am excited. We hate to lose her, but we like her next challenge, and we are excited to see how far she will go.

Thank you, Alyssa, for your service to Ohio and to our country. We will miss you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I want to come down to the Senate floor and commend a number of Senators, but I want to particularly commend the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, Senator REED, and the ranking member, Senator INHOFE, and their staff, and all the staff on the Armed Services Committee for the exceptional work they have done over the last several months to produce the strong National Defense Authorization Act that just passed in a very strong bipartisan vote here on the floor of the U.S. Senate.

That vote was 88 to 11. I think it is a prime example of something that I mention a lot back home; and that is that there is a lot more bipartisan work that gets done here in the Senate that isn't often recognized, and there is nothing more important than having Senators from both sides of the aisle come together with regard to national defense and supporting our troops and their families.

We have been doing that over 60 years in a row, where we have passed the National Defense Authorization Act—one of the most important bills that comes to the floor of the Senate and the House and the Congress. And, once again, we have passed it. And I think Chairman REED and Senator INHOFE—Ranking Member INHOFE—deserve a lot of the credit.

So I just want to touch on a couple of the key provisions here, a lot of what was in it, and then mention a few things. A lot of times it is important to recognize, actually, what is not in a bill because that can be just as important as what is in it.

But I would start with the No. 1 issue here, and it is the top-line budget increase for the Department of Defense.

I have been outspoken on the disappointment and damage that President Biden's budget, which he proposed, with regard to the Pentagon, supported, unfortunately, by many here—the majority leader, the budget chairman—that that was unacceptable—unacceptable. Why was it unacceptable? Because our Nation is facing many threats right now. Just read the paper every day—China, Russia, Iran. Yet that budget that was actually provided by the White House was a cut—a pretty dramatic cut—if you look at it as adjusted for inflation.

The Armed Services Committees in the Senate and in the House thoroughly rejected the Biden budget to cut defense spending.

We have in this bill a 3-percent real increase. That is a little over \$25 billion. This amendment, which I cosponsored with Senator INHOFE and others, to increase our defense spending, when it came to a vote in the committee, every Senator on the Armed Services Committee voted for it, with the exception of one. That is about as bipartisan as it gets.

There are many important things in this bill in terms of the significant increase to the top-line budget, but readiness, in my view, of our military is one of the most important things we do here as U.S. Senators, and now is certainly not the time to cut defense spending. I think today's vote was a strong bipartisan showing that this body does not agree with the Biden budget, and that was one really important aspect of today's NDAA.

Second, I want to talk a little bit about the great State of Alaska and its role in our military and some of the provisions in this bill that relate to Arctic security.

I like to say that Alaska constitutes three pillars of America's military might. We are the cornerstone of missile defense. Almost all the radar systems and all the ground-based missile interceptors protecting the whole country are located in Alaska.

We are the hub of air combat power for the Arctic and Asia Pacific. By the end of this year, we will have over 100 fifth-generation fighters—combat-coded, fifth-gen fighters. That is F-35s, F-22s, stationed in Alaska—over 100. There is no place on the planet Earth that has over 100 fifth-generation fighters. Supersonic stealth can get anywhere—anywhere—very quickly: Russia, China, Taiwan. That is another area of Alaska's pillars of military might.

And, finally, we are a platform for expeditionary forces, the 4-25, the only airborne brigade combat team in the entire Asia Pacific; the First Striker Brigade; and many others that can get to places all over the world, because of our strategic location, very quickly, and also because of our strategic airlift in Alaska.

But this NDAA is going to add another element of Alaska's military might to our Nation, and that is the center of gravity for America's Arctic security operations.

Last year in the NDAA, we were able to get the first and only and much needed Department of Defense Center for Arctic Security. The Department of Defense named it the Ted Stevens, after the great, late Senator. The Center for Arctic Security is going to be in Anchorage, AK.

And now, in this year's NDAA, we have what is called the Arctic Security Initiative. I was honored to cosponsor that with my good friend Senator KING